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09/755,353	01/05/2001	Carol Kohn Berning	8387\$	4976

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EXAMINER

NGUYEN, TAN D

ART UNIT PAPER NUMBER

3629

DATE MAILED: 09/21/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

## Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/755,353

Applicant(s)

BERNING ET AL.

Examiner

Tan Dean D. Nguyen

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

### Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

### Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 6/30/06.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

### Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-32 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-32 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

### Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).  
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

### Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
  - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

### Attachment(s)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)   | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)                       | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application                       |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)<br>Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____  |

**DETAILED ACTION**

***Response to Amendment***

The amendment filed 6/30/06 has been entered.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101***

The rejections of claims 20-30 (a facility) under 35 U.S.C. 101 are withdrawn due to applicant's arguments.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112***

1. Claims 1-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

(1) In claim 1, lines 4-5, "so as to test ...with said product" are vague and indefinite.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102***

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

***Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103***

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

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4. Claims 1-4, 6-8, 12-16, 19, 32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Article 3/99 “New uses ... Old Brands” by Wansink (hereinafter referred to as “WANSINK”).

As of 6/30/2006, independent method claim 1 is as followed:

1. (Currently amended) A method of conducting consumer product research, comprising the following steps:

(a) configuring a mock environment having infrastructure for testing of said product in context of a corresponding real environment;

(b) placing at least one consumer within said mock environment for testing said product and permitting said at least one consumer to interact with said product; and

(c) collecting information relating to said at least one consumer's interaction with said product during testing of said product, wherein said step of collecting information comprises collecting information with at least one device.

Similarly, **WANSINK** discloses a method for conducting consumer product research, comprising the following steps:

(a) configuring a mock environment having infrastructure for testing an item/product in context of a corresponding real environment (or simulated environment in the form of a “laboratory home” so as to test an item/product (see page 3, “everyday amenities, i.e. Arm & Hammer Baking Soda”);

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(b) placing at least one consumer within the mock environment for testing said product and permitting said consumer to interact with (or use) the product {see page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph "*uses for the brand being tested*"; and

(c.) collecting information relating to said at least one consumer's interaction with said product during testing of the product {see page 3, paragraphs 2-5 of the Article).

As for the limitation of "collecting information with at least one device", the type of device or the use of any type of communication collection device is not critical to the scope of the claimed invention and is inherently included in the teachings of WANSINK since the feedback from the consumers are analyzed or assessed to determine the effectiveness of the testing. Note that on page 2-3, WANSINK mentions the use well known devices for communication such as mail, telephone (800 consumer line), video camera for interviews or surveys, therefore, the use of any of these devices for collecting information (communication) in step (c.) above would have been obvious to a skilled artisan.

Note as for the term "corresponding real environment", this is inherently included in the teaching of WANSINK et al since "a laboratory home having a simulated environment for testing a consumer product" normally or inherently including similar features like at those at real house/home (simulate real-world environment) so that the consumer feel like being in a real environment (or at real home). So, WANSINK et al inherently include rooms or kitchen or bathroom furnished/decorated similarly to those at real home.

Note that WANSINK et al discloses that this is a better alternative to the “In-home testing” which is disclosed on page 2 of the specification due to the some similar disadvantages. Therefore, WANSINK et al provides a solution similar to the claimed invention. As for the minor difference in the type of product or service testing, this is not critical since the real issue is creating a “laboratory home” wherein a mock or simulated environment is created. The “laboratory home” of WANSINK et al can be used for testing any product in any desired contest since the claim is broad “a method of conducting consumer product research”.

**As for dep. Claim 2** (of 1 above), which relates to a well known mock environment parameter, the type of mock environment, i.e. # of areas in a simulated house, this is taught in par. 2 “lab home that has living areas, kitchen and bathroom”.

**As for dep. Claim 3** (of 1 above) which further limits (b) to within an “area”, this is taught in taught in page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> par. “consumer tour ... lab home that has living areas, kitchen and bathroom”.

**As for dep. Claim 4** (of 1 above) which deals with the time or when to collect the information, this is taught in WANSINK et al, page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> par. Alternatively, the selection of the time for collecting information is within the skilled artisan as routine experimentations to select the appropriate time which normally cover the completion of the testing to get complete information.

**As for dep. Claim 6** (of 1 above) which deals the analyzing of information, this is taught in page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> par.

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**As for dep. Claims 7-8** (of 1 above) which deals with the types of information, these are discussed on pages 2-3 of WANSINK et al. Alternatively, these are well known issues relating to conducting consumer product research as shown on the background of the invention, pages 1-2, and would have been obvious to an artisan to apply these concepts.

**As for dep. Claim 13** (of 1/7 above) which deals with well known parameter of recording consumer feedback or the type of recording, this is mentioned in page 3, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraphs, i.e. "videotapes". The use of audiovisual recording in any other place include in mock environment would have been obvious to obtain complete consumer feedbacks which includes images and data.

**As for dep. Claim 19** (of 1/7 above) which deals with the testing of plurality of products, a well known product testing parameter, these are shown on page 6 with "Baking soda", "Vinegar", and "chewing gum".

**As for dep. Claim 12** (of 1 above) which deals with a well known mock environment configuring parameter, this is shown in page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph by the use of a kitchen or bathroom for the respective product.

**As for dep. Claims 14-15** (of 1 above), these are taught in page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph "Food and Brand Lab at the University of Illinois" and carrying out the research for various consumer products.

**As for dep. Claim 16** (of 1 above), this is mentioned on page 2, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, "Advertising agencies", or also shown on page 5, last paragraph, "FoodandBrandLab.com". Alternatively, the setting up of the mock environment by any

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other establishment such as commercial would have been obvious for desired purpose to meet the commercial need.

**As for dep. claim 32 (of 1 above)**, which deals with the product testing type, i.e. functionality or appearance, this is non-essential to the scope of the claimed invention and is taught in WANSINK, new use or function of the old brand item or product.

**5. Dependent Claims 5, 9-11, 17-18, 31-32 (of claim 1 above) are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over WANSINK.**

**As for dep. claim 5 (of 1 above)**, the transmitting of the information during testing by other well known means such as broadcasting would have been obvious in view of the general teachings of various means, in-home interviews, write-in, phone surveys, etc. on page 2, to provide immediate feedback information to companies if immediate response is desired.

**As for dep. claim 9 (of 1 above)** which discloses the well known step of screening a pool of candidates to become a testing consumer, this is well known survey parameter, and would have been obvious to do so to improve survey results which is matching the real user to the real product and real environment.

**As for dep. claims 10-11 (of 1 above)** which further matching the mock environment to the consumer, this is fairly taught in page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph which general teaches the concept of matching the real user to the real product and real environment.

**As for dep. claims 17-18 (of 1 above)**, the selection of other type of product besides material such as service or a form of communication are considered as



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consumer product parameters and would have been to a skilled artisan as mere selection other similar product to obtain similar results since the kernel of the claimed invention is selection of a mock or simulated environment in the form of "laboratory home" so as to test any type product.

**As for dep. claim 31** (of 1 above), the selection of other type "information collecting device", which is non-essential to the scope of the claimed invention and is inherently included in the teachings of WANSINK since the feedback from the consumers are analyzed or assessed to determine the effectiveness of the testing. Note that on page 2-3, WANSINK mentions the use well known devices for communication such as mail, telephone (800 consumer line), video camera for interviews or surveys, therefore, the use of any of these devices for collecting information (communication) in step (c.) above would have been obvious to a skilled artisan.

**As for dep. claim 32** (of 1 above), which deals with the product testing type, i.e. functionality or appearance, this is non-essential to the scope of the claimed invention and is taught in WANSINK, new use or function of the old brand item or product. The selection of any other type of product testing such as appearance, instruction for use, etc., would have been obvious as mere selection of any other well known testing functions.

Alternatively, the selection of various parameters of conducting a consumer product research or testing is considered as optimizing operating conditions or result effective variables/parameters and the optimizing of result effective variables (or

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parameters) are considered as routine experimentation to determine optimum or economically feasible conditions and would have been obvious to the skilled artisan, absent evidence of unexpected results. There are no evidence of unexpected results shown in the specification on any of these variables/parameters. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233.

**6. Claims 20-30 (apparatus) are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over Article 3/99 “New uses ... Old Brands” by Wansink et al.**

**As for Independent apparatus claim 20, WANSINK et al discloses a facility for conducting consumer product research, comprising:**

(a) configuring a mock environment having infrastructure to enable a consumer to interact with a product to be tested (or simulated environment in the form of a “laboratory home”) so as to test a product (see page 3, “everyday amenities, i.e. Arm & Hammer Baking Soda”) in a desired context (see page 4, 1<sup>st</sup> –3<sup>rd</sup> paragraphs, “using brands in similar ways but in different contexts”, or “in similar contexts”, or “used in that usage context”);

(b) placing at least one consumer within the mock environment for testing said product; and

(c.) collecting information relating to said at least one consumer’s interaction with said product during testing of the product, wherein said step of collecting information comprises collecting information with at least one device (see page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph of the Article).

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Note as for the term “corresponding real environment”, this is inherently included in the teaching of WANSINK et al since “a laboratory home having a simulated environment for testing a consumer product” normally or inherently including similar features like at those at real house/home (simulate real-world environment) so that the consumer feel like being in a real environment (or at real home). So, WANSINK et al inherently include rooms or kitchen or bathroom furnished/decorated similarly to those at real home.

Note that WANSINK et al discloses that this is a better alternative to the “In-home testing” which is disclosed on page 2 of the specification due to the some similar disadvantages. Therefore, WANSINK et al provides a solution similar to the claimed invention. As for the minor difference in the type of product or service testing, this is not critical since the real issue is creating a “laboratory home” wherein a mock or simulated environment is created. The “laboratory home” of WANSINK et al can be used for testing any product in any desired contest since the claim is broad “a method of conducting consumer product research”.

**As for dep. Claim 21** (of 20 above), it has the same limitation as in claim 2 and therefore is rejected for the same reason set forth in claim 2 above to avoid redundancy.

**As for dep. Claim 22** (of 20 above), it has the same limitation as in claim 16 and therefore is rejected for the same reason set forth in claim 16 above to avoid redundancy.

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**As for dep. Claims 23-25**, these are inherently included in WANSINK et al in view of the teaching on page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph wherein the information are further analyzed, ideas are then moved to other groups and surveys.

**As for dep. Claims 26-27**, these are taught in page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, page 4, and pages 6-8 (\*) wherein different products, different purposes and events which require different settings or areas or rooms, focus groups and panels, are mentioned.

**As for dep. Claims 28-30**, these are taught in page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, page 4, and pages 6-8 (\*) wherein different products, different purposes and events which require different settings or areas, focus groups and panels, are mentioned.

**7. Claims 1-4, 6-8, 12-16, 19, 31-32, 20-30 are rejected (2<sup>nd</sup> time) under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over (1) WANSINK et al in view of (2) WATSON or (3) NICHOLS or (4) COPPERMAN et al.**

**As for Independent method claim 1**, WANSINK et al discloses a method for conducting consumer product research, comprising the following steps:

(a) configuring a mock environment having infrastructure for testing an item/product in context of a corresponding real environment (or simulated environment in the form of a "laboratory home" so as to test an item/product (see page 3, "everyday amenities, i.e. Arm & Hammer Baking Soda");

(b) placing at least one consumer within the mock environment for testing said product and permitting said consumer to interact with (or use) the product {see page 3, 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph "*uses for the brand being tested*"; and

(c.) collecting information relating to said at least one consumer's interaction with said product during testing of the product {see page 3, paragraphs 2-5 of the Article). As for the limitation of "collecting information with at least one device", the type of device or the use of any type of communication collection device is not critical to the scope of the claimed invention and is inherently included in the teachings of WANSINK since the feedback from the consumers are analyzed or assessed to determine the effectiveness of the testing. Note that on page 2-3, WANSINK mentions the use well known devices for communication such as mail, telephone (800 consumer line), video camera for interviews or surveys, therefore, the use of any of these devices for collecting information (communication) in step (c.) above would have been obvious to a skilled artisan.

WATSON is merely cited to teach the meanings of the term "simulated environment" or "simulator" which are to create a similar (mimicking) environment having or behaving like their real counterparts or components to provide realistic interaction experience (in this case training) {see col. 5, lines 30-41, col. 1, lines 27-40, col. 2, lines 40-45 "mimicking"}. It would have been obvious to modify the teaching of WANSINK et al by having infrastructure containing similar features like their real counterparts (real home) to provide realistic interaction experience with the product (i.e. using the product in the bathroom or kitchen) as taught by WATSON above.

NICHOLS is merely cited to teach the meanings of the term "simulated environment" which are to create a similar environment that "looks and feels" like real works to provide realistic interaction experience and the best way to prepare for high

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performance by simulating actual performance (in this case training) {see col. 11, lines 49-51 “that “looks and feels” like real”, col. 13, lines 5-17, col. 29, lines 20-33}. It would have been obvious to modify the teaching of WANSINK et al by having infrastructure containing similar features like their real counterparts to provide realistic interaction experience with the product as taught by WATSON above.

COPPERMAN et al is merely cited to teach the meanings of the term “simulated environment” which are to create a similar environment that “feels and operates” like those of real vehicles to provide realistic interaction experience (driving) {see col. 1, lines 28-33, col. 2, lines 57-67, col. 3, lines 1-7. It would have been obvious to modify the teaching of WANSINK et al by having infrastructure containing similar features like their real counterparts to provide realistic interaction experience with the product as taught by COPPERMAN et al above.

As for dependent claims 2-19, 31-32 (part of 1), they are rejected for the same reasons set forth above.

As for independent claim 20, it's rejected over the facility as shown in method claim 1 which is rejected over WANSINK et al in view of WATSON or NICHOLS or COPPERMAN et al above. In other word, it's rejected over the facility as shown by WANSINK et al in view of NICHOLS or WATSON or COPPERMAN et al.

As for dependent claims 21-30 (part of 20), they are rejected for the same reasons set forth above.

No claims are allowed.

***Response to Arguments***

8. Applicant's arguments filed 6/30/06 with respect to claims 1-30 have been considered but are not persuasive.

1) Applicant's comment that the mock environment of WANSINK does not meet the definition as defined in the specification such as "the infrastructure is intended to comprise the real, functional structure that would be present in the corresponding real environment". This is not found persuasive because this concept is taught in the context "laboratory-home" of WANSINK as shown on page 3, paragraphs 2-3.

2) Applicant's comment about the testing of a "brand" in WANSINK and not a real product is noted, however, this has no relationship to the rejection since this deal with the type of product testing, i.e. testing a new use for old brand product, and claim 1 is silent with respect to the type of product testing.

3) As for the argument with respect to the device in claim 1, the type of device or the use of any type of communication collection device is not critical to the scope of the claimed invention and is inherently included in the teachings of WANSINK since the feedback from the consumers are analyzed or assessed to determine the effectiveness of the testing. Note that on page 2-3, WANSINK mentions the use well known devices for communication such as mail, telephone (800 consumer line), video camera for interviews or surveys, therefore, the use of any of these devices for collecting information (communication) in step (c.) above would have been obvious to a skilled artisan.

***Conclusion***

9. **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire **THREE MONTHS** from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within **TWO MONTHS** of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the **THREE-MONTH** shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than **SIX MONTHS** from the mailing date of this final action.

No claims are allowed.



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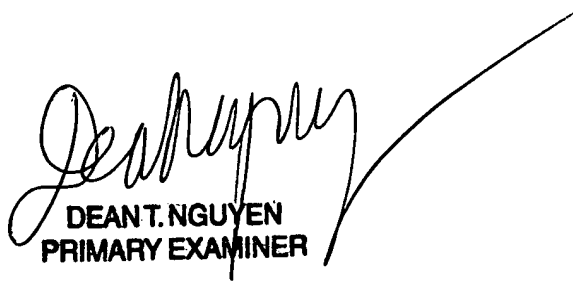
10. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct@uspto.gov>. Should you have any questions on access to the private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll free).

In receiving an Office Action, it becomes apparent that certain documents are missing, e. g. copies of references, Forms PTO 1449, PTO-892, etc., requests for copies should be directed to Tech Center 3600 Customer Service at (703) 306-5771, or e-mail [CustomerService3600@uspto.gov](mailto:CustomerService3600@uspto.gov).

Any inquiry concerning the merits of the examination of the application should be directed to Dean Tan Nguyen at telephone number (571) 272-6806. My work schedule is normally Monday through Friday from 7:00 am - 4:00 pm. I am scheduled to be off every other Friday.

Should I be unavailable during my normal working hours, my supervisor John Weiss may be reached at (571) 272-6812. The FAX phone numbers for formal communications concerning this application are (571) 273-0325. My personal Fax is (571) 273-6806. Informal communications may be made, following a telephone call to the examiner, by an informal FAX number to be given.

dtn  
September 13, 2006



DEAN T. NGUYEN  
PRIMARY EXAMINER